

*ATTEMPTS OF DESCRIBING THE PROBLEMS LINKED TO  
THE LIAISON BETWEEN SCHOOL AND TERRITORY*

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## *Introduction*

The object of this essay is first of all to sketch the theoretical outlines of the problem uniting school and territory, notably by illustrating it with the analysis of the experiment carried out in this matter by the local actors in the Italian valley of Sérino, secondly to present the Observatory of the Rural School (ORS), whose research concerns the school specificities of the rural and mountain environment as well as to present its European partners who are going to integrate the REIT<sup>9</sup>.

### **1/ Simplified theoretical approach of the link school and territory**

#### **1.1. Two basic concepts**

The connection school - territory is based on a certain number of fundamental notions of which school and territory are naturally the most important.

##### **1.1.1. The territory.**

According to Gumuchian (1997), " the term territory has a double meaning: either it refers to a juridical-administrative reality, as it is the case in the expression " regional development ",

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<sup>8</sup> Observatoire de l'Ecole Rurale – OER - Observatory of Rural school is abbreviated in French to ORS and in English to ORS; for further information see the website: <http://www.grenoble.iufm.fr/rural/default.htm>

<sup>9</sup> REIT = Réseau Européen d'Intelligence Territoriale or European Network of Territorial Intelligence ; see web site : <http://mti.univ-fcomte.fr/reit/>

or it refers the concept of territoriality as it has been widely accepted in the social sciences for about twenty years. As much a natural as a social reality, the territory is not easily disintegrated. The environment, the practices, the representations and the socio-political organizations constitute a system of which the different elements are interdependent from one another".

The territory we are relating to here corresponds de facto to places, not necessarily adjoining, linked by networks, fitting together to different degrees, generators of sense and identity. The crucial question thus is to know from "when", that is from which type and which level of organization onwards a natural or "anthropised space" becomes a "territory". The criterion that was preliminarily withheld by the team of the ORS, which includes geographers, sociologists, representatives of world of the sciences and of education as well as educational actors, is that there is no territory without a collective "projection" of its agents or actors towards a common future having obviously a function in relation with their identity.

#### 1.1.2. The school.

The school is seen here as educational system (primary schools, lower secondary schools – colleges in France, upper secondary schools – lycées in France- , services and administration) organized on a territory within the framework of interdependent networks. As far as the educational plan is concerned , for example, the notion of area of recruitment of a school viz. the "perimeter" for the primary or school "card" for the secondary school do not automatically refer to an educational territory. To be able to speak of territory in terms of education it is therefore necessary to pass onto a higher degree of school organization, for example to a training and education area called ' un bassin' which develops a collective response to the major education and training needs defined for that particular area.

#### **1.2. A means of action: the partnership.**

This is of course the main element that supports the social, economic, cultural and educational processes of territorialisation. The partnership supposes obviously autonomy of management and autonomy of the financial capacity of the partners. This is an element which create a lot of difficulties for primary schools to be involved in partnerships, as unlike secondary schools and higher education institutions they have (at the moment?) no financial autonomy and no moral personality .

#### **1.3. A process which is under way : the integration of the school in the broad sense, as an agent, in the development of the territory.**

In spite of the difficulties mentioned above, the school gets involved more and more, also in the primary school, in the territorial development (via cultural and educational partnerships, via school outings and via transplanted classes, via orientation and professional integration activities, via the map of the vocational training and via the continuous training of the employees, etc.).

#### **1.4.A keyword: contractualisation.**

It develops according to modalities and different formalizations according to the level of implementation.

1.4.1. Mutual Support (1st level / for example in the financial negotiation with the trusteeship councils).

1.4.2. Putting in common of the resources (2nd level / for example by sharing the documentary resources available or by developing a policy of joint acquisition).

1.4.3. Common Projects (3rd level / for example in the help given to facilitate the professional insertion of the pupils or in the training of the development agents).

### **1.5. Fast zoom on the main current characteristics of the rural school and of the French mountain school and its essential adaptations to the needs of the rural and mountain communities.**

1.5.1. Specific forms of schooling: small size of the educational units, multilevel classes with one teacher (or single classes<sup>10</sup>), fragmented or centralized inter-municipal pedagogical regroupings.

1.5.2. Offer of limited non-specialized training, both technological and professional: less diversification of the options in lower secondary schools (Collège) and less diversification of the series<sup>11</sup> of upper secondary higher education diplomas (Lycées) or baccalaureates. .

1.5.3. Progressive emergence of an offer of specific rural and mountain vocational training : “additional” agricultural trainings or “complementary” national education with the objective” to lead to multiple employment.

1.5.4. No real curricula adapted to the rural and mountain areas except in a few special cases.

1.5.5. School results: relatively successful in the single classes of the 1st degree (cf. studies of DEP / MEN in 1990), weaker results in the in the 2nd degree (cf. annual national statistics), uneven results in mountain areas (cf. study of the Rectorat<sup>12</sup> of Grenoble 1989-1990), etc.

1.5.6. School and professional guidance: the school and professional guidance projects are more modest projects than in an urban environment (cf. national statistics DEP / MEN), there is less geographic mobility (cf. study of the department of AIN 1991 and works ORS on 2002), etc.

1.5.7. Teaching staff too much or too little mobile (cf. annual national statistics DEP / MEN).

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<sup>10</sup> Single classes are classes with one teachers and pupils of different age levels in the same class.

<sup>11</sup> Séries or series is used in the upper secondary schools or lycées to indicate the options which pupils can chose!

In the general branch, there are three series: literary (L), based mainly on French, philosophy and modern languages; economic and social sciences (ES), based mainly on economics and social sciences; science (S) based mainly on mathematics, physics and natural sciences. In the technological branch there are four series: Tertiary sciences and technology (STT); Industrial sciences and technology (STI); Laboratory sciences and technology (STL), Medical and social sciences (SMS). In addition to these four series which were redefined in 1993, there are three series preparing pupils for specific technological Baccalauréats: hotel and catering, applied arts, and techniques of music and dance.

<sup>12</sup> Rectorat: France is subdivided as far as education is concerned into ‘Académies’ which are each under the responsibility of ‘un recteur’. The rectorat is the totality of the services of one Académie. France has 28 académies or rectorats which correspond roughly to the regions of France.

1.5.8. Development of strategies to break out of the isolation: constitution of school networks between schools of the same territory (example: "réseaux buissonniers du Vercors" or Hedgehog Networks of the Vercors Region"), regular use of ICT (cf. works ORS of 2002 / example: "inforoutes of Ardèche"), establishment of sustainable partnerships with the local community (example: links with regional natural parks or reserves in the departments of Alpes de Haute Provence, Ardèche and the Drôme).

1.5.9. Setting up of a real "didactics of the territory": take as a starting point the knowledge linked to the identity and the cultural roots of the pupils to make them build the disciplinary and transversal knowledge of the curriculum (cf. experience of Sérino).

## **2. Rapid analysis of the "case" of the valley of Sérino (Campania / Italy).**

### **2.1 Framework of the social experiment.**

The experiment took place at the end of 1990s in Italy, in the region of Campania, near Naples, in Sérino more exactly, in a context of a very disadvantaged starting point: an economic, social and cultural poor environment, a valley without real collective project and pupils without a local future. The experiment enabled the elaboration, then the application of a vast multi-annual educational project (five years) linked to the problem of "school and territory". It has illustrated the various functional and institutional links which can be weaved and developed between the school environment and the university environment (primary schools, lower and upper secondary schools, universities) and the territory in which the experiment is set up and is implemented.

### **2.2 Investigated tracks.**

Three main tracks of cooperation between the school and the territory, three openings of the school on its "environment", were investigated successively and quite rapidly in Sérino:

- the school, as tool for the cultural, social, ecological and economic development (use of the premises for training purposes, use of the documentary educational resources and of the pedagogical resources of the school in favour of the employees and the development agents of the surrounding territory).
- the school, as place of memory and tool of valorisation for heritage and territory (adoption of monuments and sites by the pupils, the classes, the schools, restoration, the development and the promotion the aforementioned sites and monuments, etc.).
- the school, as agent of the sustainable economic development (participation in construction sites, elaboration and dissemination of documents with cultural, social or economic objectives, the creation within partnerships of cultural, social, ecological and economic activities).

### **2.3 First balance**

All these educational activities have of course as a primary result to give a lot of meaning to didactics and learning, and they are susceptible to be used within the framework of the psycho-

pedagogical support as part of the educational and professional guidance which is intended to facilitate later on the social and professional integration of the pupils. All those pedagogical activities also facilitate learning of the pupils with major learning disabilities by finalizing in a clear way the efforts made to learn. All activities, finally, suppose obviously a strong will to open the school to "its" territory, as well as a willingness to use active pedagogies which enable pupils and teachers to go out of their schools to integrate them better and more strongly into the environment which they want to protect, to promote and to develop. Those pedagogical activities suppose as well that first contacts are established and that exchanges are developed between school and territory so as to open up the school. It is hoped that; later on these activities will lead to stable and sustainable partnerships. Although these partnerships will be subject to change in their modalities and contents, they will finalise pedagogical and educational activities in co-operation with the social, environmental, economic and institutional associations and organisations.

In brief, the tracks illustrated by Sérino design a school with a project, which next to the practice of an active pedagogy that gives responsibilities to pupils and to teachers, also makes them cooperate – on a contractual basis - directly with all the lively forces of their territory; a school trying to insert indeed into "its" territorial environment; a school avid to open itself others and to the outside world; a school which, by its impact on the development of "its" territory, wants to favour the future social and professional integration and insertion of its pupils who wish this in "their" country, while, of course, taking care "not to lock" the pupils who do not wish it in a local collective fate.

Obviously, all similar projects do not have the scope of the one of Sérino: multi-annual duration, a grouping in the action of a big number of primary and secondary schools, a pluri-disciplinary dimension, etc. And do not necessarily have to have the same large scope! Furthermore, it is not the objective of importing somewhere else a "recipe" which gave satisfaction in another context but it is much more the objective, from the point of view of the school, to facilitate the involvement of the school agents in an educational engineering process susceptible of giving to the pupils of the rural and mountain schools chances of success and insertion equivalent to those which pupils in less culturally, socially and economically isolated contexts benefit from and this by making use of the richness of the local rural and mountain environment within the framework of true didactic of the environment."

3/Brief presentation of the Observatory of the Rural School (ORS) and its European partners

To obtain more information, consult the Web site of the ORS at the following address:

<http://www.grenoble.iufm.fr/rural/default.htm>

### **3.1 Implemented research**

#### **3.1.1 Field of investigation.**

Rural and mountain spaces and successes at school: forms of schooling, activities to overcome isolation, links territory- school, pedagogical approaches, didactical tools etc.

#### **3.1.2 Methodology.**

Analysis and interpretation of the follow-up of a sample group of 2.400 pupils originating from 6 representative departments of three rural zones recently identified by INRA<sup>13</sup> / INSEE<sup>14</sup> (1998). They were subject to questioning or interviews four times: CM2<sup>15</sup> = year n, year n+2, year n+4, year n+5.

Parents and institutions were also questioned or interviewed at the same deadlines. A crossing of the data base of ORS was carried out, according to the French and European plans, with evaluations DPD 6-th and 2nde

### 3.1.3 Schedule.

- 1999-2000: constitution of the sample CM2, queries or interviews " CM2 "; inputting of the results and first analyses
- 2000-2001: constitution of the sample for the "fifth class"<sup>16</sup> and the publication of the first results
- 2002-2003: query of the "fifth class; inputting and analysis of the results
- 2003-2004: preparation of the query of the "third class "; transfer (spring, 2004), inputting (the end of 2004 ); analyses of the query of the "third class"<sup>17</sup> and the publication of the results of the query of the "fifth class"
- 2004-2005: preparation of the "Second class"<sup>18</sup> query and transfer (spring, 2005), inputted ( the end of 2005 )
- 2005-2006: analysis of the "query of the second class" and the publication of the last results
- 2006-2007: final synthesis and final colloquium.

### 3.1.4 Objectives

Identification of the main parameters having an influence on the success at school and the orientation in rural and mountain areas and study of the possible impact of three strategies of how to break of the isolation as they are implemented by the rural and mountain schools: regular use of ICT, work in networks and constitution of sustainable durable partnerships with organisation and bodies outside the national education system.

### 3.2 European Partners.

Linking up, beyond schools, ten institutions of higher education or universities of ten different European countries partners of the ORS; two European seminars on the rural and mountain schools were already held at the initiative of the Observatory in 2000 (Aix-en-Provence, IUFM) and in 2001 (Barcelona, UAB). The third should take place in 2005 (Salerno University). The ORS and its nine European partners created links in 2004 with the European Network of Territorial Intelligence ( REIT) within the framework of which a team of autonomous research was created within the framework of the European 6th CPRD<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> INRA = Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique; see web site: <http://www.inra.fr/>

<sup>14</sup> Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques : see web site : [http://www.insee.fr/fr/home/home\\_page.asp](http://www.insee.fr/fr/home/home_page.asp)

<sup>15</sup> CM2 (Cours Moyen 2)= last year of primary school; see Eurybase: <http://www.eurydice.org/Eurybase/Application/frameset.asp?country=FR&language=VO>

<sup>16</sup> Fifth class = second class of lower secondary school or Collège

<sup>17</sup> Third class = 1<sup>st</sup> year of upper secondary education of the Lycée

<sup>18</sup> La seconde or the second class is the second class of the upper secondary school or Lycée ; it is followed by two more years "la première" and "la terminale" during which they take the "baccalauréat".

<sup>19</sup> 6<sup>th</sup> CPRD= 6<sup>th</sup> Community Programme for Research and Development

Six partners out of the ten have already decided to integrate, within a team of autonomous research working on the contribution of the rural school to the territorial intelligence: the REIT, the universities of Barcelona (UAB / ARE), of Bucharest ( RO) and of Salerno ( IT), and the primary schools and secondary schools of ( FI) and Avellino (2 / IT).

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